

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

In review: 'Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa'
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 73/NO. 6 FEBRUARY 16, 2009

Washington to double troops in Afghan war

BY DOUG NELSON

The White House and Pentagon plan to nearly double U.S. forces in Afghanistan over the next year in an effort to turn the tide in their war against Islamist forces there and in northeast Pakistan.

In confronting the scope of the challenges they face, the imperialists have also scaled back their political objectives in Afghanistan. Presidential elections there have been postponed by about four months until August 20, given the failure of U.S., NATO, and Afghan military forces to establish control over much of the country.

The total number of U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan combined is at least 62,000. There are between 32,000 and 34,000 U.S. troops. U.S. officials are considering plans to increase that force by about 30,000, including four additional combat brigades.

At the same time, top U.S. officials are discussing plans to continue reducing the 143,000-strong U.S. force in Iraq, where Washington has made progress in establishing a relatively stable allied government. But by how much and how fast remains unclear.

President Barack Obama has publicly said he plans to fulfill his campaign

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Labor dept: 6.5 million jobless get no benefits

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Some 6.5 million unemployed workers don't receive any unemployment benefits, according to a report by the U.S. Labor Department. Another 8 million workers have been forced into working only part-time hours.

With new layoffs announced by major companies just about every day, the number receiving unemployment compensation is now the highest since records began being kept 40 years ago. Nearly 6.5 million workers receive checks, but at amounts much below their pay than when they were working.

From September to December 2008, U.S. employers laid off 2 million workers. At the end of January large corporations continued to announce layoffs encompassing thousands. BHP Billiton, the world's largest mining group, is cutting 6,000 workers from its operations in Australia, the United States, and Chile. The company announced plans to cut coal production by about 15 percent.

John Deere & Co., which makes farm equipment, plans to lay off about 700 workers at factories in Brazil and Iowa. Other job cuts include 10,000 at Boeing; 6,000 by British drug maker

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'Working people need to organize, take power'

L.A. socialist campaigns for mayor



Militant/Naomi Craine

James Harris, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Los Angeles, campaigns at January 29 teachers' rally in Los Angeles to protest education cuts.

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

LOS ANGELES—"The various 'economic stimulus' packages being debated in Washington have nothing to do with providing jobs and a decent standard of living for workers," said James Harris, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Los Angeles, at a January 31 campaign rally here. Harris, a union meat packer, explained that the "stimulus" plans are a diversion from recognizing the true source of the crisis—capitalism—and

the urgency of workers taking political power out of the hands of the billionaire rulers.

"My campaign fights to give a class understanding of politics and the workings of the capitalist system so that working people can defend ourselves from the ravages of the economic crisis that is now unfolding. I have to say that it becomes much easier to explain that proletarian revolution is the only road out of the disaster

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Attorneys for jailed Cuban 5 file Supreme Court appeal

BY SETH GALINSKY

Attorneys for five Cuban revolutionaries unjustly held in U.S. prisons for a decade filed an appeal with the U.S. Supreme Court on January 30.

Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, and René González have been locked up since September 1998. The five had been gathering information on right-wing groups of Cuban exiles based in Florida that have a history of violent attacks on Cuba with the support of Washington.

A federal court convicted the five in 2001 on frame-up charges ranging from "conspiracy to commit espionage" to failing to register as agents of a foreign government. Hernández was also falsely accused of "conspiracy to commit murder."

In 2005 a three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals threw out the convictions on the basis that the five men could not get a fair trial in Miami. A year later the full 12-judge court overturned that ruling, while allowing for appeal on other points. The court upheld their convictions again on September 2 last year.

The appeal focuses on three main questions: the refusal of the presiding judge to grant a change in venue for the trial, the disproportionate exclusion of Blacks from the jury, and the absence of any evidence for the murder charge against Hernández.

It also takes up "improper" statements by the prosecutor during the trial, including saying that the jurors would be abandoning their community unless they convicted "the Cuban sp[ies] sent to . . . destroy the United States."

In spite of the history of government collusion in Miami with organizations that oppose the Cuban Revolution, attempts to intimidate those who express a point of view on Cuba different from those groups, and extensive bias about the case in the Miami press, Judge Joan Lenard in 2001 refused to move the trial to a different city.

The 11th Circuit Court in 2006 ruled that all this was irrelevant and that the venue did not need to be changed unless it was "virtually impossible" to get a fair trial.

Richard Klugh, the attorney for Fernando González, said in a phone inter-

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Gaza borders remain closed as Tel Aviv, Cairo squeeze Hamas

BY SETH GALINSKY

February 4—As Israeli and Hamas representatives continue to meet separately with Egyptian negotiators on Tel Aviv's conditions for reopening border crossings in Gaza, the Egyptian government has been stepping up efforts to prevent the shipping of weapons to Hamas through tunnels from Egypt. Cairo is installing motion sensors, cameras, and ground-penetrating radar to detect tunnels

along the Egypt-Gaza border, with the help of U.S. Army, French, and German engineers.

Until the Israeli assault, which ended in a political and military defeat for Hamas, Cairo had been reluctant to allow foreign forces to participate in controlling the Egypt-Gaza border.

The Palestinian daily *al-Ayyam* reported that Egyptian security forces blew up several tunnels near the Ra-

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Political interest boosts 'Militant' renewal effort

BY ANGEL LARISCY

Supporters of the *Militant* worldwide are deepening political relationships with the paper's readers during the January 24 through February 24 campaign to win 400 long-term subscribers. At the same time, on tables and sales teams in working-class communities and on

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N. Carolina meat packers fight bosses' harassment

BY SETH DELLINGER

TAR HEEL, North Carolina—Two months after workers at the massive Smithfield Packing hog slaughter plant here voted to be represented by the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), meat packers say they continue to face company harassment and dangerous work conditions.

Many workers spoke of the need to build on their December 11 victory in winning a union to respond to the bosses' attacks. The 2,041 to 1,879 vote came after a 16-year fight, dating back to the opening of the plant in 1992.

"You voted for the union, now you will lose your privileges," workers were told by some bosses, according to Josefina Trinidad, 33, a third-shift cleaner on the cut floor. Her brother-in-law told her that supervisors had shortened breaks in his department and are demanding a higher quality product.

The bosses "were more lenient before. Now they're using the big stick," said another worker, who asked that his name not be used. He said he has faced harassment after making known that he voted for the union. According to this worker, there have been several hundred firings in the last month based on a company policy where workers are given points for missed work days. "Twelve points can get you fired," he said, "but before the election, some people had 20 or 30 points, and they didn't do anything."

Accidents on the job, a key reason for much of the union's support, continue to be rampant. Trinidad said a coworker recently lost several fingers when they got stuck in a machine. She herself was injured when a piece of metal fell on her

hand. "But the company doctor sent me back to work the next day."

The union victory is being closely watched by the nonunion workers at QSI, Smithfield's in-house cleaning contractor. Workers at QSI recently saw their pay cut from \$9.25 to \$9 an hour, according to Trinidad. In November 2003 several hundred QSI workers carried out two successive walkouts to defend themselves against antiunion harassment by the company.

Lemuel Heslip, a worker in the conversion department who actively campaigned for UFCW representation, told the *Militant* that a lot of work remains to be done to strengthen the union. He pointed to a walkout by 1,000 Smithfield workers in 2006 which succeeded in reversing dozens of firings of coworkers accused of working with false papers. He saw that as an example of the kind of unity that would be necessary in the coming contract fight. "That was before I worked here. I didn't really understand it until I started working in the plant," Heslip said.

"I think the next step is to get the people together," he said. "If we don't show Smithfield we mean business, then they won't take us seriously."

Socialist campaigns at N.Y. transit hearing



Militant/Tom Baumann

BROOKLYN, New York—Dan Fein (inset), Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of New York City, campaigned among the more than 400 people attending a Metropolitan Transportation Authority fare-hike hearing January 28 in downtown Brooklyn.

Among those outraged by the proposed fare hikes and elimination of popular bus lines, the most outspoken were the elderly and disabled. Part of the proposed increases would raise fares on the door-to-door transit Access-A-Ride from \$2 to \$5. "We are on fixed incomes," explained one elderly rider. "Where are we supposed to get the money from?"

"There is no solution under capitalism to this crisis," Fein said, as he spoke with many attending the hearing. "The working class needs to make a revolution in order to reorganize society by what is needed, instead of by private profit."

—TOM BAUMANN

Vancouver cops charged in attack on immigrant

BY NED DMYTRYSHYN

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—Three off-duty cops brutally assaulted Firoz (Phil) Khan, a night newspaper delivery worker, here on January 21. Two of the cops have been charged—one with assault, the other with robbery.

Two sanitation workers and a cab driver may have saved Khan from a fatal beating by protesting the thug attack and refusing to leave the scene.

Khan told the media he was entering the downtown Hyatt Regency Hotel to deliver his papers when he was approached by one of the assailants, who said, "Come here, you f--ing idiot." The cop grabbed him and began to beat him.

Khan said a few minutes later the attacker was joined by two others. As they beat him one of them said, "we don't like brown people." Khan is originally from Fiji. The assailants also said, "We are the Vancouver police."

Khan said they took \$200 and his cell phone and also threatened to Taser him. "They kicked me in my head, kicked my back, legs, everywhere," added Khan.

As Khan pleaded for help a couple of city workers, a cab driver, and workers at a nearby McDonald's rushed to help.

Within minutes Vancouver police appeared and initially handcuffed Khan. After the bystanders protested, the police handcuffed the assailants instead.

After public outcry, the Vancouver chief of police recommended that two of the three be charged with assault and robbery. He recommended that no charges be made against the third cop even though Khan insists that he also participated in the assault.

Cop Jeffrey Klassen has been charged with assault and Griffin Gillan with robbery. Both have been suspended with pay.

Steve Penner contributed to this article.

THE MILITANT

U.S. troops out of Darfur!

Washington's Africa Command has just carried its first major mission on the African continent, flying supplies to 'peace-keepers' in the Darfur region of Sudan. The 'Militant' explains why U.S. intervention there is not in workers' interests.



U.S. troops secure cargo in C-17 in preparation for flight to Darfur region of Sudan.

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Reactionary UK strikes oppose immigrant jobs

BY TONY HUNT

EDINBURGH, Scotland—Some 3,000 construction workers across the United Kingdom, with the support of trade union leaders, have participated in reactionary unofficial strikes and protests aimed at foreign-born workers. The actions take place under nationalist slogans such as “British jobs for British workers,” echoing a 2007 statement by Prime Minister Gordon Brown, or “Put British workers first.”

The strikes began January 28 when about 600 skilled contract construction workers, members of the union Unite, walked out at the Lindsey oil refinery, owned by the French company Total in Lincolnshire in the north of England. This was after a U.S.-owned contractor subcontracted work to an Italian firm that decided to employ Italian and Portuguese workers on the job. They are allowed to do so under European Union law.

According to the *Times* newspaper, some 40 demonstrators sought out the ship housing the Italian workers and staged a protest there demanding that they “go back to their own country.”

The work stoppage at Lindsey was followed by actions on at least 20 construction sites at energy facilities in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

Capitalist newspapers have had varying reactions. *The Times*, expressing the capitalists’ need for “the free movement of labour,” said “erecting barriers to imports and to labour is a tempting route and a disastrous one.” The right-wing *Daily Express*, on the other hand, covered the actions sympathetically.

Top union leaders have backed the actions, which they do not normally do with illegal strikes. The *Daily Telegraph* reported that government ministers were “informally discussing the situation” with union leaders.

Brendan Barber, the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, expressed support for the actions and Derek Simpson, joint general secretary of Unite, said, “The union is doing everything in its power to ensure that employers end this immoral, potentially illegal and politically danger-

ous practice of excluding UK workers from some construction projects.”

Kathleen Walker Shaw of the GMB union said the issue was “social dumping across Europe.”

According to the *Sunday Times* the unions involved are planning a protest in London which the paper dubbed “a national march against foreign workers.”

Prime Minister Brown and Business Secretary Peter Mandelson have both attacked the strikes. Meanwhile Peter Hain, a former Labour government minister, said that the actions showed something had gone “badly wrong” with British employment laws. “After all, the first duty of a British government is to protect its own voters, its own citizens and its own workers,” Hain said.

The ultraright British National Party (BNP) is promoting the strikes, featuring coverage prominently on its Web site. BNP leader Nicholas Griffin, in a statement entitled “Solidarity with the construction lads,” called for “Sympathy Strikes Now!”

A statement by the UK Socialist Workers Party, a petty-bourgeois leftwing party, said, “these strikes are based around the wrong slogans and target the wrong people.”

The *Morning Star*, the newspaper of the Communist Party of Britain,



Getty Images/Christopher Furlong

Several hundred workers gather at the Lindsey oil refinery in North Lincolnshire, England February 2 for the fourth day to protest hiring of Italian and Portuguese workers. Anti-working-class strikes and protests have spread to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Some trade union officials have called for national march against immigrant workers.

defended the actions. On February 3 under a front-page headline reading “Strikers defy arctic storm: walkouts over foreign jobs spread to power stations,” the paper glowingly referred to the actions as “unofficial strikes against EU-sanctioned ‘social dumping.’” It also reported that “the Communist Party of Britain urged support for the workers ‘rising up against the whole rotten set-up.’”

Communist League leader Jonathan Silberman, speaking at a public meeting in London January 31, said, “Communist workers oppose these

reactionary strikes. Clarity on these actions is decisive. They *are* aimed at workers from overseas and are against the interests of all working people. Such nationalism is a deadly trap, the more so at a time of capitalist crisis and spreading wars.

“Mass immigration into the United Kingdom and other imperialist countries has strengthened the working class,” Silberman said. “Forging unity with our brothers and sisters from other countries is a life-and-death question for the labor movement as the bosses’ attacks deepen.”

Tokyo uses Somalia ‘piracy’ for militarization drive

BY SETH GALINSKY

Taking advantage of piracy off Somalia’s coast, the Japanese government is taking another step to extend use of its armed forces abroad. Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada ordered the dispatch of Japanese ships January 28 to the Somali coast to combat “pirates.” They could be in place by March. The next day, the Swedish government agreed to send two ships to join the European Union’s mission there.

The warships will join others in a force sent by the governments of at least 16 countries—Australia, Britain, Canada, China, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, India, Iran, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, and the United States—that have patrolled Somalia’s waters or are on their way.

Following Japan’s defeat in World War II, Washington imposed a constitution on the country that restricted its armed forces to defense purposes. A provision of that constitution expressly prohibited deployment of the Japanese military abroad.

Such restrictions severely weaken the ability of the Japanese rulers to use their army effectively abroad. In 2004 Tokyo sent combat troops to Iraq that were restricted to construction and development projects.

Washington is one of the biggest backers of the multinational force and played a key role in passage of a United Nations resolution authorizing foreign intervention in Somali airspace, waters, and territories. On January 26, Michael Ranneberger, U.S. ambassador to Kenya, announced that the Kenyan government had agreed to imprison and prosecute Somalis captured by U.S. forces.

More than 30 percent of the world’s oil is transported through the Gulf of Aden, which runs from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean, bordered by Yemen to the north and Somalia to the south. Some 40 ships were hijacked off Somalia’s 1,880-mile coastline in 2008.

Its social fabric torn after 18 years of civil wars between rival clans and U.S. and Ethiopian military intervention, one-third of Somalia’s population is dependent on aid from United Nations agencies and private charities. Somalia’s main exports are livestock, bananas, hides, and fish.

According to the *New York Times*, piracy began after the fall of the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Siad Barre in 1991. Foreign capitalist fishing fleets took advantage of the ensuing chaos and plundered Somalia’s tuna-rich waters. Some fishermen armed themselves, confronting the illegal fishing boats and demanded they pay a “tax.”

BBC News describes how this grew and was transformed into a capitalist “piracy industry,” that is now a mainstay of the Puntland region in northeast Somalia. The port city of Eyl even has restaurants set up to prepare food for the crews of hijacked ships.

The imperialist-led naval intervention is not aimed just at defending oil and other shipments, but at finding a way to get a stable capitalist government in place in Somalia.

The president of Somalia, Abdullahi Yusuf, resigned in late December. His government—which never controlled much more than a few city blocks in Mogadishu, the capital—was put in power by a U.S.-backed Ethiopian invasion in 2006 that overthrew the So-

malis Islamic Courts Union.

After the last Ethiopian troops withdrew from Somalia on January 25, the Islamist Al-Shabab took over the town of Baidoa, which had been the seat of parliament, without resistance. It now controls much of the south and center of the country, where it has imposed its version of sharia law, including the destruction of shrines of traditional saints.

According to BBC News, “huge crowds in Mogadishu” celebrated the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops.

The parliament assembled not in Somalia, but in neighboring Djibouti to choose Yusuf’s replacement. On January 30 the politicians there voted to expand parliament from 275 seats to 550, with 275 members of the Alliance for the Reliberation of Somalia.

On February 1 they chose Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, a leader of the Alliance and former head of the Islamic Courts Union, to be the new president.

Sharif defeated Maslah Mohamed Siad, the son of former dictator Siad Barre, in the second round of voting.

The U.S. embassy in Kenya issued a statement welcoming Sheikh Sharif’s election.

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Trade unions in the epoch of imperialist decay

by Leon Trotsky

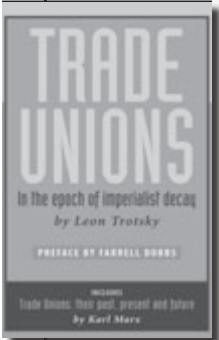
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Gaza borders closed

Continued from front page
fah crossing February 1.

The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported February 4 that an agreement was near to reopen the crossings in exchange for the release of Gilad Shalit, an Israel Defense Forces soldier held by Hamas since 2006. The agreement would include Hamas rival Fatah, which governs Palestinian areas of the West Bank, re-taking control of Gaza crossings along with European monitors.

According to the Palestinian Federation of Industries, some 215 factories and workshops in Gaza were destroyed or seriously damaged during the assault, and the continuing embargo makes it difficult for others to function.

Tel Aviv is holding Hamas responsible for any mortars or rockets fired at Israel from Gaza, even if launched by groups opposed to Hamas. Israeli air strikes hit Gaza at least three times since the end of January in response to mortar and rocket fire.

Not only did the Israeli assault destroy much of Hamas's military infrastructure and force it to end its rocket and mortar attacks on Israel, it also accelerated a shift in Hamas's admitted goals. Three Hamas leaders in Gaza told the Associated Press they would give up their "resistance" in exchange for a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank. "We accept a state in the '67 borders," Ghazi Hamad, one of the three, said January 29 in a reference to Israel's borders before the 1967 war in which Tel Aviv seized parts of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. "We are not talking about the destruction of Israel," he said.

The aftermath of the assault on Gaza, a popular war among Jewish Israelis, is the biggest issue in Israel's upcoming February 10 elections.

Just two weeks before the election some 30 percent of Israeli voters were still undecided. Until recently the main candidates were former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu from Likud, along with two of the three key architects of the war, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni from the Kadima Party and Defense Minister Ehud Barak from the Labor Party.

Front runner Netanyahu says that the Israeli government ended the offensive in Gaza too soon and should "overthrow the Hamas rule in Gaza." Although he says that "any Palestinian state that would be formed under the current conditions would become an Iranian state," Netanyahu refused to sign a loyalty oath backed by four other right-wing parties pledging to rule out forever the formation of a Palestinian state.

Netanyahu calls for more aggressive action against Iran's nuclear program. Accusing Tehran of backing Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, he said, "We are going to have to deal with neutralizing the power of the mother regime."

'Peace' candidate

Livni, who is in second place according to polls, portrays herself as the "peace" candidate. She says she is for creation of a Palestinian state as a way to ensure that Israel remains a Jewish state. That way Livni can go to "Israeli Arabs and say to them 'you are citizens with equal rights, but the national solution for you is elsewhere,'" she told high school students in Tel Aviv. Twenty percent of Israel's population is Arab and they have demanded an end to discrimination in jobs, housing, education, and government services.

Defense Minister Barak, who is a distant third in polls, vows that Israel will "keep one hand on the pistol." Barak criticizes the economic policies of both Likud and Kadima. Kadima's policy "is filled with confusion," he said, while "Netanyahu is the ultimate representative of the sweeping capitalist outlook which is collapsing everywhere."

As election day approaches, some

Montreal: Tamils protest Sri Lankan repression



Militant/John Steele

MONTREAL—Young Tamils and their supporters march with banners and placards along Montreal's busy Jean Talon Street February 1 to protest repression of Tamils by the Sri Lankan army. "We want people in Canada to know what is happening," Jeda, a demonstration organizer from the Montreal Tamil Organization, told the *Militant*. Three days earlier in Toronto, home to 200,000 Tamils, up to 45,000 formed a massive human chain on a number of downtown streets to demand an end to the repression.

—JOHN STEELE

polls show the extreme right Yisrael Beiteinu party even with Barak's Labor Party.

On January 21 Israel's High Court of Justice overturned the central election commission's decision to ban two Israeli-Arab parties, the United Arab List and Balad. The ban was instigated by Yisrael Beiteinu.

The Israeli assault on Gaza and the continuing restriction on aid to Palestinians there is not popular among Israel's Arab citizens.

"Our message is to go out and vote," said United Arab List chairman Ahmed Tibi, in answer to some organizations of Israeli Arabs that call for an election boycott. This is necessary, Tibi said, "to avoid rewarding the right, which wants a Knesset without Arabs and wants the whole country to be without Arabs."

Balad held one campaign rally in Hebrew and plans another for February 4 in an attempt to win more Jewish support for its platform of "full civil equality" and "a state for all its citizens."

Interest in politics boost 'Militant' renewals

Continued from front page
campuses, many are finding increased interest in the paper because of the political situation today.

In the first week of the campaign 86 readers have renewed their subscriptions, putting the drive behind schedule for the 100 needed each week. But initial reports on callings and meetings with subscribers point to the interest there is in reading the paper and revolutionary books. In the past week distributors have sent in 19 introductory subscriptions.

Supporters of the socialist newsweekly in Newark, New Jersey, met with three subscribers over the weekend who renewed, two of whom began reading the paper for the first time in the fall. One woman came to the Socialist Workers campaign headquarters to sign up for a renewal and purchased three Pathfinder books.

On the same day, two campaigners went to central New Jersey to meet with a leader of a day laborers organization who renewed his subscription and bought the Spanish editions of *New International* no. 14 and the new edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?*

In addition to setting up meetings and talking with readers about renewing their subscriptions, a team to Rutgers University in Newark sold 20 copies of the *Militant* and five books in just over an hour, reports Nancy Rosenstock. "A number of students there commented they wanted to learn more about socialist ideas because of the current state of the capitalist economic crisis and growing wars," she said.

"Last Wednesday I was staffing a table at Florida International University when a student came up and asked if he could get a subscription to the *Militant*," writes Maggie Trowe of Miami. "He explained he had bought an introductory subscription when Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers candidate for vice president, and campaign supporters were at FIU last fall," Trowe said. He decided to renew for a year and also bought *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* and *New International* no. 14.

Supporters of the paper from Twin Cities, Minnesota, traveled to Faribault and Albert Lea and signed up three workers who wanted to renew. Twin Cities supporters are planning other teams in the region to places where they sold subscriptions in the fall, reports Rollande Girard.

Over the next three weeks, supporters of the *Militant* will be trying to reach everyone who subscribes to the paper to discuss politics with them. If you'd like to meet distributors of the socialist press in your area, please see the directory on page 6. Renew your subscription today and help convince others you know to subscribe.

On the Jewish Question

by Leon Trotsky

"In the epoch of its rise, capitalism took the Jewish people out of the ghetto and utilized them for its commercial expansion. Today decaying capitalist society is striving to squeeze the Jewish people from all its pores. . . . Never was it so clear as it is today that the salvation of the Jewish people is bound up inseparably with the overthrow of the capitalist system."
—LEON TROTSKY, 1940



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UNITED KINGDOM			
Edinburgh	7	1	14%
London	15	1	7%
UK Total	22	2	9%
CANADA	15	3	20%
NEW ZEALAND	12	5	42%
SWEDEN	8	0	0%
Int'l Totals	399	86	22%
Should be	400	100	25%

Bronx bakery workers' strike enters 6th month

BY MAURA DELUCA

BRONX, New York—The strike by workers at the Stella D'oro cookie factory here is now in its sixth month. Members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM) Local 50 have withstood freezing temperatures, snow and ice for several months without any workers crossing the line.

Some 220 people marched down Broadway in the Riverdale section of the Bronx supporting the strike by the 136 bakery workers January 31.

Scab workers have been hired through various job fairs, and many were lined up before the strike began last August. According to strike captain Mike Filippou, Brynwood Partners, a holding company that bought Stella D'oro from Kraft Foods in 2006, recently tried to hire the temporary workers on a permanent basis. He said that the National Labor Relations Board ruled against this effort.

Brynwood Partners' only amendment of their original contract proposal is to put workers' retirement funds into a 401(k) plan, rather than the current pension plan. Their contract offer included slashing wages up to 25 percent, cutting sick days and vacation days, and increasing employees' contribution to their health insurance plan. According to Joyce Alston, president of BCTGM Local 50, not one of the workers accepted this, and they unanimously voted to strike.

"They don't want to give us anything. They want to take away vacation pay and everything. This is unacceptable," said Michele Agnello, a striker who worked as a packer in the plant.

Among those participating in the rally, which took place on the picket line at the plant, were many of the strikers and officials from several other unions. The demonstrators marched to a popular shopping area where they distributed flyers appealing for support to the strike. Two of



Militant/Yvonne Lee

Striking workers at Stella D'oro Biscuit Co. and supporters march in Bronx, New York, January 31 to oppose concessions demanded by company. At microphone is striker Sara Rodríguez.

the workers who were part of the successful sit-in at Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago addressed the rally. Edward Ott, of the New York City Central Labor Council, came to support the strike as well. Dan Fein,

Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of New York City, spoke at the gathering at the end of the march. The action was organized by the Committee in Support of the Stella D'oro Workers.

"You can't live in New York with the salary and benefit cuts the company is proposing," said Jorge Flores, one of the strikers at the rally who worked in sanitation for Stella D'oro. "This rally is important because we need to get more people involved. Nationwide people need to know about this."

Robert Roman, a butcher and United Food and Commercial Workers Local 342 shop steward at the Garden Manor Farms meatpacking plant in the Hunts Point area of the Bronx, attended the rally. "It's important to be here because I went through the same thing trying to get a union in where I work," he said. "The bosses didn't want to give anything. We were just getting crumbs."

The union has issued a call for a boycott of Stella D'oro products, and has been getting boycott leaflets out to local grocery stores. "Boycott Stella!" "No Contract, No Cookies!" and "We are Stella!" were among the chants of the strikers during the march.

U.S. union membership rises 2nd year in a row

BY SETH GALINSKY

More workers became members of unions in 2008, according to the annual report from the U.S. Department of Labor. Union membership in the United States increased in 2008 for the second year in a row.

According to the report, the number of union members increased by 428,000 last year, the biggest annual gain since the government began keeping records in 1983.

Union membership peaked at 35 percent of the workforce in the 1950s and declined to 20 percent by 1983, due to the class-collaborationist course of the union officialdoms, which subordinates the use of union power to the election of capitalist politicians. In one sign of the continued weakening of trade unions, that mem-

bership decline continued until 2006 when it reached a low of 12 percent.

The modest increases over the last two years are an indication that some workers are looking to the unions for protection in face of the deepening worldwide economic crisis.

Some 12.4 percent of workers were union members in 2008, up from 12.1 percent in 2007 according to the government report. Union membership rates rose in 26 states and the District of Columbia, declined in 20, and were unchanged in 4.

Most of the increase came from government workers, whose union membership rate rose from 35.9 percent in 2007 to 36.8 percent in 2008.

While the percentage of union construction workers rose from 13.9 percent in 2007 to 15.6 percent in 2008, and among manufacturing workers stayed at a little more than 11 percent, the number of union miners declined

sharply from 9.3 to 6.9 percent in that same period.

A higher percentage of workers who are Black—14.5 percent—are union members compared to 12.2 for white workers and 10.6 for Asian and Latino workers.

The government report notes that while union membership for men, 13.4 percent, is higher than for women, 11.4 percent, "the gap between their rates has narrowed considerably since 1983, when the rate for men was about 10 percentage points higher than the rate for women." That gap narrowed as union membership for men declined by 11.3 percent from 1983 to 2008, while for women it declined 3.2 percent.

The states with the highest percentage of union membership are New York, Hawaii, and Alaska. The lowest are North Carolina, Georgia, and South Carolina.

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25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



February 17, 1984

Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Mel Mason denounced President Reagan's February 7 statement on Lebanon and called for "immediate, unconditional withdrawal of every U.S. Marine, 'adviser,' battleship, and jet" from Lebanon and the rest of the Mideast.

"The U.S. government has no right to impose its will on the Lebanese people," Mason said February 8. "The people have clearly rejected the terrorist regime of Lebanese Pres. Amin Gemayel, who was put in power by Washington and Israel. So now Reagan has given orders to bomb the Lebanese people into submission.

"As long as there are any Marines in Lebanon, or off the coast, those troops will be used for aggression against the Lebanese people. They never were—and cannot be—a 'peacekeeping force.'"



February 16, 1959

The United Auto Workers has called on Congress to aid the growing army of permanently jobless by enacting legislation for a shorter workweek. Meanwhile Senator Patrick McNamara (D-Mich.) introduced a bill January 21 to reduce the federal workweek law to 35 hours.

Announcement of the shorter hours stand taken by the UAW International Executive Board was made by Walter Reuther, the union's president.

Reuther also said that the program being worked out calls for creation of union machinery at local, state and national levels to deal with the unemployment problem.

Such activity had already been initiated in the Detroit area by the recently formed UAW Production and Skilled Workers Unemployed Committee.



February 17, 1934

Demonstrating their solidarity with their heroic Austrian comrades, 5,000 militant workers paraded to the Austrian Consulate at 5 p.m., Wed., Feb. 14, where they were joined by thousands of others. Several hundred police, mounted and on foot, brutally charged into the crowd again and again.

Carrying red flags and banners, denouncing Fascism and pledging solidarity with their comrades on the barricades in Austria, the workers kept their lines solid and marched around the block where the Consulate is located.

The demonstration, which was originally called by the S.P. and YPSL [Socialist Party and Young Peoples' Socialist League], was supported by all Left wing workers and was a splendid united front action, marred only by the efforts of the Stalinists to disrupt the Socialist marching lines.

Lessons from labor party campaigns in the 1880s

Below is an excerpt from Revolutionary Continuity: The Early Years, 1848–1917 by Farrell Dobbs. It is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for February. The book covers the origins of Marxism in Europe, its early influence in the United States, and the historic line of march of the working class to forge a revolutionary leadership. The selection below describes the results of an economic recession in 1884 that led to an upsurge of mass support for an eight-hour day and openings for independent working-class political action. Copyright ©1980 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FARRELL DOBBS

During the 1884–86 labor upsurge large numbers of both native-born and foreign-born workers joined trade unions. This widening discontent with existing social conditions led to an expansion of the workers' united struggles as a class, which manifested itself in a series of strikes over economic demands. Then, early in 1886, the conflict assumed political characteristics with a massive strike wave in support of the eight-hour day. While trade unions directed this demand against one or another particular employer in economic



Jobless packinghouse workers march through Chicago's stockyard district on one of many "Hunger Marches" during 1930s. Then, as during labor upsurge in mid-1880s, the road forward was best described by Frederick Engels. "The first great step of importance for every country newly entering into the movement is always the constitution of workers as an independent political party," he wrote.

struggles, it had broader significance. The workers as a class were pressing a political issue against the capitalists as a class, explicitly so in calling for laws to limit the hours of labor.

The indicated next step for trade unionists was building their own political organization, and they moved instinctively in that direction. By the fall of 1886 labor parties, with platforms that varied from city to city, had again sprung up in several industrial centers and were running candidates for public office. This time, it should be noted, the Marxist tendency in the Socialist Labor Party took a more positive attitude toward the rising movement for political independence.

A major campaign was organized in New York City, where the Knights of Labor, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, and the Socialist Labor Party acted jointly to launch a mass party in labor's name. A majority chose Henry George to head the new party's slate as its nominee for mayor. He was the leader of a petty-bourgeois sect that advanced a taxation scheme as a cure-all for the evils inflicted by capitalism. It centered on the notion that all social ills were rooted in the private ownership of land. George advocated a gradual increase in the land tax until it was equal

to the full rent of the land, thereby expropriating all land rent for public use. All other taxes were then to be abolished, a concept which led to popular designation of the George sect as "single taxers."

But this strategy left the existing social relations of production untouched. Without the expropriation of the decisive forms of productive property, the industrial and financial bourgeoisie would remain free to exploit the toiling masses, who produce the surplus value that is the source of all rents, interest, and profit. And they would continue to use their ownership of capital to maintain political sway over the nation. Hence, the whole proposal was reformist to the core.

Nevertheless, the "single tax" panacea of Henry George, the main candidate, was included in the New York party's platform. The socialists—who rejected the "single tax" fallacies—backed the campaign organized around the George ticket, because what was decisive was organized labor's stepping forward into the political arena as an independent class force.

Labor party campaigns launched in other cities were supported by the Socialist Labor Party for the same reason. The various platforms for these inde-

pendent mass political actions focused on issues of immediate concern to the workers in each locality. Little or no attention was given to the "single tax" idea, which remained limited essentially to New York.

The labor slates, taken as a whole, made an impressive showing in the November 1886 elections. Henry George, for example, got almost a third of the total vote cast in New York. Elsewhere, candidates put forward by the organized workers were in a few instances elected, and the overall results of the balloting maintained interest in the developing independent political action. The workers' mood opened the door to uniting the several local labor parties as the first step in building a national political movement. [Frederick] Engels took up this perspective in the letter of November 29, 1886, to [Friedrich] Sorge . . . centering his remarks on the New York situation.

"The first great step of importance for every country newly entering into the movement is always the constitution of the workers as an independent political party," he counseled, "no matter how, so long as it is a distinct workers' party. And this step has been taken, much more rapidly than we had a right to expect, and that is the main thing. That the first program of this party is still confused and extremely deficient, that it has raised the banner of Henry George, these are unavoidable evils but also merely transitory ones. The masses must have time and opportunity to develop, and they can have the opportunity only when they have a movement of their own—no matter in what form so long as it is *their own* movement—in which they are driven further by their own mistakes and learn through their mistakes. . . . If there are people at hand there whose minds are theoretically clear, who can tell them [the workers] the consequences of their own mistakes beforehand and make clear to them that every movement which does not keep the destruction of the wage system constantly in view as the final goal is bound to go astray and fail—then much nonsense can be avoided and the process considerably shortened" (*Letters to Americans, 1848–1895*, pp. 163–64, emphasis in original).

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6 The Militant February 16, 2009

Militant Labor Forum in N.J. defends Ft. Dix 5

BY NANCY ROSENSTOCK

NEWARK, New Jersey—Family members of four of the five immigrant workers convicted on “terrorism” charges joined a panel discussion at a Militant Labor Forum here January 30 to protest the frame-up. They have become known as the Fort Dix Five.

“Mahmoud Omar, the FBI informer, followed my brother everywhere,” explained Inas Shnewer at the Militant Labor Forum January 30. Shnewer, a student at Rutgers University in Camden, New Jersey, is the sister of Mohamad Shnewer, one of five young men convicted last December of conspiracy to kill U.S. soldiers at Fort Dix.

Shnewer detailed how the informer was the one who prodded on her brother. “He took my brother to Fort Dix and told him ways to bomb the base,” she explained. “Omar told him, ‘you just talk, talk, and talk and don’t do anything,’” she said. “He even offered my brother \$10,000 to buy weapons, which my brother refused.”

The defendants were all in their twenties when arrested in May 2007. They live in Cherry Hill, a New Jersey suburb of Philadelphia.

Mohamad Shnewer, originally from Jordan, drove a taxi in Philadelphia. Serdar Tatar is from Turkey and worked in a convenience store in Philadelphia. Three brothers—Eljvir Duka, Dritan Duka, and Shain Duka—are ethnic Albanians from the former Yugoslavia who ran a roofing business.

Lejla Duka, the 11-year-old daughter of Dritan Duka, shared the panel. She described the harassment she faces at her school. “I am being called a terrorist,” she explained. She said prison authorities have repeatedly denied her regular visits to her father, whom she has only seen twice in the last two years.

Ruth Robinett, speaking for the

Socialist Workers Party at the forum, outlined the U.S. government’s long history of FBI informants and agents provocateurs, as well as the use by the government of conspiracy charges.

These policies, still being carried out today, Robinett said, are part of the preparations by the U.S. government and the rulers for the battles by working people that loom on the horizon. “This conviction by the government against these five men is an assault on the freedom of all us.”

Following their arrest in May 2007, the five men were denied bail and put in a special unit at the Federal Detention Center in Philadelphia.

Sentencing for the Fort Dix Five is scheduled for late April. The men could face life imprisonment.

L.A. socialist: workers need to take power

Continued from front page

that capitalism is creating for working people,” he said.

This disaster does not stem from a lack of regulation, corrupt Wall Street CEOs, or bad oversight, he continued. “It is the product of the workings of the capitalist system.”

“The capitalists worldwide have seen a fall in their profit rates,” Harris explained. “They face stiffening competition, shrinking outlets to boost profits by expanding productive capacity and putting more workers to work, and repeated banking and financial crises. In face of these pressures, they are driving down our wages, speeding up production, cutting government social programs, and going after our unions.

“As working people, we are used to trying not to think about politics and just concentrating on trying to make it for ourselves as individuals and our families. But that way of thinking is coming to an end because of what is now being forced upon us. We will have to transform ourselves and our unions to build a movement capable of replacing the propertied minority in government with a government of workers and farmers.”

Employee Free Choice Act

Harris was joined on the platform by Eleanor García, a sewing machine operator who announced her campaign for U.S. Congress in the 32nd district. García launched her campaign after Democrat Hilda Solis announced that she was vacating her seat to become secretary of labor in President Barack Obama’s cabinet.

“Hilda Solis’s appointment has been touted by some as a victory for the union movement because of her support to the Employee Free Choice Act, under which a union would be certified without an election if enough workers signed cards saying that they want one,” said García. “But even if this bill becomes law, it won’t change the deepening crisis of the unions, which is above all a product of the officialdom’s decades-long course of subordinating the interests of labor to those of the bosses and their capitalist parties.

“The class struggle can’t be avoided. Workers need to fight to build the kind of unions we need—unions that do not subordinate labor’s interests to those of the bosses.

“Under capitalism there is no equality



Militant/Angel Lariscy

Militant Labor Forum in Newark, New Jersey, January 30 on the Fort Dix frame-up case. Speaking is Inas Shnewer, sister of Mohamad Shnewer, one of the five defendants. At left is Ruth Robinett, Socialist Workers Party.

of sacrifice,” continued García. “Working people need to put our interests as a class first. That’s why the socialist campaign puts forward a series of demands that are designed to unify working people in struggle.” She said the socialist campaign platform calls for shortening the workweek with no cut in pay to spread the available work. It demands Washington provide millions of jobs at union-scale wages, building schools, hospitals, roads, and other infrastructure.

There should be cost-of-living clauses in all contracts, pensions, and other benefits, she explained, so as prices go up, workers’ income goes up too. To cut across the divide-and-rule strategy of the employers, the socialists call for enforcing affirmative action and they demand legalization of immigrant workers without papers and an end to raids and deportations.

The socialist candidates also call for canceling the foreign debt of semicolonial countries and lifting all U.S. protective tariffs.

“Bourgeois education teaches us that nothing will ever change. The dog-eat-dog system of capitalism has always existed and always will,” García said. “Capitalism, even in the United States, can be overthrown. But to do that we need to forge a leadership that is up to the challenge. The forging of this leadership, whether in the United States, Palestine, or on the African continent, is the central question that the working class has before it.”

Harris joined thousands of teachers, teachers’ aides, cafeteria workers, students, and parents here on January 29 to protest state and local education cuts.

“I’m proud to be here, joining with these workers,” said Harris. “Their fight is in the interest of all working people,” he explained, as he marched with a group of students and teachers from Animo High School.

The California state budget faces a \$42 billion deficit by the middle of next year. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is already proposing to cut \$4.8 billion from public school budgets. According to the United Teachers of Los Angeles, which organized the protest, this could mean layoffs of up to 107,000 teachers statewide and increasing class sizes by up to 35 percent. Schools superintendent Ramon Cortines announced that the Los Angeles Unified School District will notify teachers on March 15 which ones

could lose their jobs next fall.

Danny Monterroso, a 16-year-old student at Crenshaw High School, told Harris, “I came here to protest this injustice, cutting schools when we already don’t have enough funds. Why don’t they bail out students instead of the banks?”

“Why is art useless?” asked Katherine Ayala, 17, who attends Miguel Contreras High School. There is a freeze on arts programs in the schools here.

‘Education is a right’

“Before education for all can become a priority, working people will have to take political power out of the hands of the capitalists and reorganize society from top to bottom,” answered Harris. “We will have to make a socialist revolution.

“From the standpoint of working people, education is a right,” Harris said, “but the rulers could care less if we can read or write, if we have arts programs in our schools. Their main concern is that we get to work on time when they need us and that we fade quietly into the background without protest when they don’t.”

Tanya Chambers, a senior cafeteria worker and member of Service Employees International Union Local 99, participated in the march with 10 coworkers and a banner reading, “Stop the Cuts! Support Our Schools!”

Chambers explained that cutbacks in school lunches are already in effect. “We used to serve elementary school students three items, but that has been cut to two. Junior and high school students will be eating less too, from five items to three.”

Seventy-eight percent of students in the Los Angeles Unified School District are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals—a number that is growing as the official unemployment rate in Los Angeles is approaching 10 percent. “How can these kids be engaged, how can they learn, if they are hungry?” Chambers asked.

Cuts in the school lunch programs are occurring at the same time as the state of California has temporarily halted payments to state welfare programs, services to the disabled, child-care programs for working-class families, and mental health and drug abuse programs, issuing \$3.5 billion in IOUs instead. State income tax refunds are also included in this pile of IOUs.

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‘Capitalism and transformation of Africa’

Pathfinder book spotlights new class relations emerging today in Equatorial Guinea

BY BEN JOYCE

Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa, a new book by Pathfinder Press, is a must read for those who want to understand the realities facing millions in Africa and the semicolonial world as they are drawn into the capitalist world market, and how this advances the fight to emancipate the working class and oppressed peoples the world over.

The book is the product of two trips by reporting teams to the Central African nation of Equatorial Guinea in 2005 and 2008. The reporting teams were led by the authors, Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, and Martín Koppel, managing editor of the *Militant*. The compilation of reporters’ notes, articles, photographs, and interviews pres-

IN REVIEW

ents a picture of the new class structure emerging in that country and much of Africa today, as capitalist economic and social relations penetrate even the most remote areas of the world to a much greater extent than ever before.

Some 15 years ago, large deposits of oil and natural gas were discovered off the coast of Equatorial Guinea and today that country is the third largest oil producer in sub-Saharan Africa. This highly modern, capital-intensive industry is laying the foundations for the development of a modern capitalist class structure there.

Equatorial Guinea is a small country, largely unknown to many, located on the western coast of Africa.

Part one of the book contains large, illustrative maps and concise background information. Several pages of attractive photo spreads help walk the reader through what the reporters discovered and give a real-life feel for the unfolding development in the country.

Working class in formation

This is not a book about the legacy left by centuries of colonial domination and the consequences of imperialist plunder, already widely known and documented. Instead, the authors take a much more forward-looking approach focusing on



A contingent of construction workers, part of a new proletariat coming into existence in Equatorial Guinea, march in Independence Day parade in Evinayong, Oct. 12, 2005.

the working class, being drawn from the four corners of the earth, that is developing.

The “transformation” that the title refers to is the rise of a modern capitalist class structure in this historically underdeveloped part of the world. The book shows how capitalism, in its never-ending search for profits, scours the globe and constantly brings new forces into the world economy. The authors cite the *Communist Manifesto*, which said that as capitalism spreads, “in place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations.”

Revenue taken in by the Equatorial Guinea government from oil contracts is being used in part to develop basic infrastructure on which modern industry and rising labor productivity depend. The book gives some examples of these structural developments and the impact it has on the population. An upgrading of the road system, for example, means that hundreds of thousands gain much easier access to health-care facilities, schools, markets, and jobs. Travel that

previously took days can now be done in a few hours. The book highlights these and other developments that pose far-reaching advances in the standard of living for the working class there.

The authors point out that as the working class is consolidated in new parts of the world, it gains strength not only numerically, but more importantly in terms of its social weight. “The intertwining of all these experiences is of even greater importance today as the most devastating global contraction of capitalist production in some three-quarters of a century accelerates worldwide,” explains the introduction. “Decades of wars, economic, social, and political crises, explosive class battles, and revolutionary struggles lie ahead of us. . . . As the beginning transformation of Equatorial Guinea helps underscore, the toilers of Africa will have greater weight in shaping that future than ever before.”

Cuba’s proletarian example

Parallel to the developing capitalist class structure, another side of the transformation taking place in Equatorial Guinea is the impact of internationalist

solidarity from working people in Cuba and their revolutionary government. A 2005 speech by Víctor Dreke, then Cuban ambassador to Equatorial Guinea, at the country’s first book fair is included in this volume.

The book illustrates through the reports and photographs one of many examples of proletarian internationalism that Cuba has extended to toilers around the world—in this case the efforts and resources that Cubans extend to the toilers of the region through cooperation in establishing a medical-care system.

As of September 2008 there are some 160 Cuban doctors, nurses, and laboratory technicians in Equatorial Guinea who provide services in hospitals and health centers throughout the country, including in remote areas where such care has previously been inaccessible and unaffordable.

A section of the book that details the medical cooperation program includes a report on the medical school in the city of Bata, which is led and staffed by Cuban volunteers. A top priority of the medical program is the training of Equatorial Guinean doctors who will eventually replace the brigades of Cuban volunteers. An article on the medical program at the university in Bata describes the pride and confidence of recent Guinean graduates.

The medical cooperation with Equatorial Guinea and many other examples of Cuba’s internationalist missions throughout the world stand out as a truly unique expression of working-class solidarity. The depictions of this in the book enable the reader to see the living example of Cuba’s socialist revolution *in action*.

The process unfolding in Equatorial Guinea described in this book bodes well for working-class fighters and their allies around the world. New recruits to the international proletariat who have the benefit of the internationalist example of Cuba’s socialist revolution adds strength to the struggle for emancipation of the working classes and oppressed peoples of the world.

Six Miami workers face third ‘terrorism’ trial

BY OMARI MUSA

MIAMI—After two mistrials on charges of “terrorist conspiracy,” six construction workers, known as the Liberty Six, will soon face a third trial on the same charges.

Jury selection began January 27 for the six young Black men. Narseal Batiste, Patrick Abraham, Stanley Grant Phanor, Rotschild Augustine, Burston Augustin, and Naudimar Herrera were charged with conspiring to aid al-Qaeda and conspiring to blow up the Chicago Sears Tower and FBI buildings.

Their first two trials ended in hung juries. Their arrests were announced June 2006 by then-attorney general Alberto Gonzales at a Washington, D.C., news conference amid great fanfare. He claimed the men formed a “homegrown” terrorist cell. The arrests were hailed as part of the fight against “terrorism.”

A seventh man, Lyglenson Lemorin, was acquitted after the first trial

in December 2007. After his acquittal, Lemorin was immediately jailed by Immigration and Customs Enforcement on the same charges and faces deportation to Haiti. He is a legal U.S. resident.

The seven are members of a religious group, Seas of David, which held meetings in Liberty City, a large Black community in Miami.

The government’s case rests on the activities of two FBI informants, Elie Assad and Abbas al-Saidi, a Liberty City shopkeeper. Assad identified himself to Batiste as a representative of Osama bin Laden. The government accuses the six men of taking an oath of loyalty to bin Laden—an oath administered by Assad.

Assad also persuaded some of the men to take photos of “target” sites in Miami. The camera was given to the defendants by Assad.

Both Assad and al-Saidi had done previous service as government informers. The government snitches

had bankrolled rent on the warehouse and had it fitted with hidden cameras and microphones. Both were paid more than \$130,000 plus hotel and expenses for their work.

The political character of the frame-up as an attempt to bolster lagging public support for the “war on terrorism” was noted by Jeffrey Agron in an interview with the *Miami Herald*. Agron was the jury foreperson in the first trial.

“There are people who are skeptical and are probably even more skeptical about what has been done in the war on terror, Agron said. “The passage of time and two mistrials will play into that.” Referring to the two mistrials he said, “I don’t see the third trial turning out much different.” Referring to the jury for the third trial, the foreperson in the second trial, José Talavera, said, “They will want to see more, but it’s not enough. We never saw any intentions by the group to do anything.”

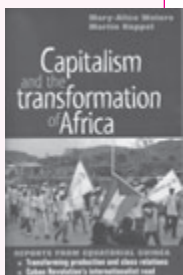
Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa: Reports from Equatorial Guinea

by Mary-Alice Waters and Martín Koppel

In the decades of wars, economic crises, and explosive class battles that lie ahead, the weight of the toilers of Africa in shaping the future will be greater than ever before. The beginning transformation of production and class relations in Equatorial Guinea and the proletarian course of the Cuban Revolution show a future to be fought for today.

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Referendum in Bolivia approves new constitution

BY RÓGER CALERO

HOUSTON—With 61 percent support, voters in Bolivia approved a new constitution in a January 25 national referendum, handing a victory to President Evo Morales. The results registered continued approval for the president amidst an intensifying campaign by Bolivian capitalists and landowners to undermine his government.

The referendum is the latest step by the Morales government and his Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party to gain greater control of government institutions, and the approval of policies granting greater rights to the country's majority indigenous population. Morales and the MAS have relied on the electoral process to advance these measures in the face of an opposition that has mobilized violently in the streets, threatening to paralyze the country with the goal of bringing down the government.

This is the second time Bolivians have voted in a national referendum since Morales was elected president in 2005. Last August he won 67 percent of the vote in a recall referendum on his presidency, called by Morales himself.

In addition to seeking to give greater control to the central government over natural resources and the distribution of the country's wealth, the charter gives new rights to the country's majority indigenous population, including recognition of pre-Columbian religions and promotion of indigenous languages. It could also result in larger representation of indigenous regions in Congress and in the justice system by calling for the election of judges, instead of having them appointed by Congress.

The new constitution also allows Morales to run for another five-year term in the December elections.

In a separate ballot question 80 percent of the voters approved a cap of 12,000 acres (5,000 hectares) on the size of future large landholdings instead of twice that area. Current landowners, however, will not be impacted.

Support for the constitutional referendum came largely from indigenous peasants and workers from the country's highlands. Of the country's nine provinces the referendum failed in the four wealthier low-lying eastern provinces controlled by the opposition.

In order to implement most of the reforms included in the new constitution, the Morales government says it will have to pass more than 100 laws. The president will have to do that in a legislative body where the opposition has an edge against him and has already shown its determination to block his proposals.

"No constitution can be implemented if it has not been approved in all of the departments," said Carlos Dabdoub, a political leader in Santa Cruz, which has been a center of opposition to Morales.

Class polarization in Bolivia has been intensifying. Working people are seeking to defend government measures to exert more control over the country's natural resources and improve living conditions. At the same time capital-

ists and landlords, who are threatened by the demand by workers and peasants for redistribution of farmland and natural gas revenues, are organizing to undermine these gains.

In order to win approval by Congress to hold the constitutional referendum, Morales made a number of concessions, including abandoning a more radical land reform proposal and his original plan to seek two extra terms in office. He also made other concessions on the autonomy of local governments and congressional voting procedures.

Meanwhile, thousands of peasants, workers, and youth mobilized in the months leading up to the approval of the vote by Congress and afterwards to win support for the "yes" vote. Many of these actions have come under attack by ultrarightist thugs organized

Greece: meeting celebrates 'In Defense of Socialism'

BY GEORGES MEHRABIAN

ATHENS—A standing-room-only crowd pressed into the Greek-Cuban Friendship Association hall here January 28 to launch the Greek edition of *In Defense of Socialism* by Fidel Castro.

The Athens publishing house Diethnes Vima released the title on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. The book contains four speeches given in 1988–89 by Fidel Castro in the weeks surrounding the 30th anniversary of the revolution.

Among the 60 people attending the event here were West African and Palestinian immigrants living in Athens.

Hermes Herrera Hernández, Cuban ambassador to Greece, spoke, explaining that in the four speeches Castro underlines that there is no other option for the oppressed and exploited but to follow in the footsteps opened up by the Cuban Revolution, that is, socialism.

Christina Pantzou, a journalist for the Athens daily *Eleftherotypia*, also spoke. "This book is particularly useful in looking at the internationalist role of the Cuban fighters in Africa and the role of voluntary labor as necessary aspects of changing the very people involved," she said.

Natasha Terlexis of Diethnes Vima underlined the importance of the book for today's toilers. "World capitalism has entered its worst crisis since the 1930s," she said. "We face the consequences of this crisis: imperialist wars, unemployment, and drastic assaults on the social wage, health care, education, culture, housing, and political rights. Twenty years ago in these speeches Castro presented another perspective for the Cuban toilers and for humanity as a whole—a struggle for a society based on human solidarity as the only realistic perspective for the toilers, a fight to take state power from the hands of the capitalist class."

Nikos Karandreas, president of the Greek-Cuban Friendship Association, closed the meeting by explaining that "in 1989 when there was increasing pressure on Cuba to follow the road of the Soviet Union toward capitalist restoration, Cuba took another road,



Indigenous women join protest in La Paz, Bolivia, December 3 against privatization of water system. Working people and indigenous peasants are seeking to defend government measures for more control over country's natural resources and to improve living conditions.

by the provincial governments of Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni, and Pando, which are controlled by the opposition.

Thousands are expected to gather at a February 7 celebration of the enact-

ment of the new constitution organized by the Bolivian Workers Federation, the Central Peasant Union Confederation of Bolivia, and the National Coordinator for Change.

one of continuing to fight for a socialist perspective based on internationalism, on real involvement by the working people in governance and in the struggle against bureaucracy.

"This book is the record of that decision and, along with *The First and Second Declarations of Havana* [published in Greek two years ago], is a vital contribution to understanding the Cuban Revolution." Venezuelan ambassador Rodrigo Chaves Samuëo also spoke at the event.

Fourteen copies of the book were sold at the book launch. The Greek-

Cuban Friendship Association also purchased 50 copies.

Another 10 copies, along with 11 other titles on the Cuban Revolution, were sold the next day at the 50th anniversary celebration attended by some 400 people. The Greek-Cuban Friendship Association organized that meeting.

So far 16 bookstores in Athens, Katerini, and Thessaloniki have ordered 75 copies of the new book. Book launches are currently being planned for the latter two cities for later in the winter and spring.

Cuban Five attorneys file appeal

Continued from front page

view from Miami that the case is not just of importance to the five, but affects everyone's right to a fair trial. "It's a fundamental right to have a trial where the deck is not stacked against you," he said.

According to Klugh the Supreme Court will decide in May "at the earliest" whether or not it will hear the ap-

peal. If the court does not hear the case, the five will still be able to file habeas corpus motions in federal district court.

New Year's messages from each of the five noted the growing international support for their release. "Our case is more and more known throughout the world, and more voices are joining the demand that we be freed," wrote Fernando González.

WORKER-BOLSHEVIKS SEND 'BLOOD MONEY' TO ADVANCE COMMUNIST MOVEMENTS' PUBLISHING PROGRAM

Communist workers in San Francisco started off the New Year by sending in "holiday bonus" bribes to the socialist movement's Capital Fund.

Eric Simpson, who works as a sewing-machine operator at a plant that repairs uniforms for firefighters, sent in a \$25 "Christmas bonus" from his bosses. Simpson said it was easy to explain to his coworkers why he was giving the money to the communist movement. "I've had to already explain why I don't take the donuts they give out every Friday or attend company parties," he said. "It's all just a bribe."

Joel Britton, a groundskeeper, and Carole Lesnick, a sewer, sent in \$5 and \$2 bonuses their bosses handed out at the beginning of the Chinese New Year.

Workers sending in these "bonuses" by the bosses to the Capital Fund is consistent with the long and proud tradition of workers in the revolutionary socialist movement of not accepting company "blood money" bribes. It comes with our blood on it and that of fellow workers.

The money goes to advancing the long-term publishing program of the communist movement—to produce the political weapons workers need to understand the laws of the wages system and be better equipped to fight to abolish this system for all time and replace it with the rule of working people.

—SAM MANUEL

Redouble efforts to free Cuban 5!

Attorneys for the five Cuban revolutionaries unjustly jailed in U.S. prisons have submitted an appeal of their convictions to the Supreme Court. Now is the time all working people should redouble our efforts to demand that Washington release them.

Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, and René González have been incarcerated for more than a decade. Falsely charged with “conspiracy” to commit espionage, they were in Miami to collect information for Havana about right-wing groups carrying out violent attacks against the Cuban people with Washington’s complicity. They were arrested and jailed in September 1998 and have since been subjected to brutal treatment in an attempt to break them. They remain on the front line of the struggles of working people against capitalist exploitation.

Everything from the 17 months spent in solitary confinement before their trial, to the denial of visas to the wives of two of them for visits are examples of the brutal treatment that many working people in the United States face in jail today.

The repeated FBI break-ins and theft of personal belongings, wiretapping of phone conversations, use of evidence that was kept secret from the defense during the trial, use of conspiracy charges, and re-

fusal to move the trial to a new venue all illustrate the broad attack on workers’ rights this frame-up trial represents. With one in 99 adults in the United States behind bars, their case rings familiar to thousands who face similar circumstances in the U.S. “justice” system.

This case is also an example of Washington’s 50-year-long attempt to punish the Cuban people for taking political power and defending their interests against imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation. The five are exemplary revolutionaries who refuse to be broken by Washington’s dictates.

As Richard Klugh, the attorney for Fernando González, recently pointed out, this case is not just about the five, but affects everyone’s right to a fair trial. The U.S. rulers are accelerating their assault on workers’ rights as their crisis gets deeper. They use laws like the Patriot Act of 2001 and the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 to keep working people in line as they try to solve their crisis off our backs.

The concert in New York and demonstration in Washington, D.C., last September, along with letters from two major U.S. unions, are a few examples of how we can spread the word about their fight and win their freedom. Free the Cuban Five!

U.S. gov’t to double Afghanistan force

Continued from front page

promise to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq over the next 16 months—except those needed to train Iraqi forces, provide “security,” and fight “terrorists.”

However, Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey said January 14 that he sees the combined number of troops deployed in the two wars “going up slightly and staying up until about the middle of 2010,” meaning that more would be sent to Afghanistan than would be withdrawn from Iraq. U.S. defense secretary Robert Gates and other top military officials have expressed disagreement with any 16-month timetable and have made clear they have a long-term perspective for U.S. troops in Iraq.

“As our military presence decreases over time, we should still expect to be involved in Iraq on some level for many years to come,” Gates told the House Armed Services Committee January 27.

Gates: focus on ‘realistic’ goals

Gates has said the U.S. military should focus on goals that “can be achieved realistically within three to five years” in Afghanistan to establish a measure of “stability,” meaning a regime not hostile to U.S. interests in the region.

“My own personal view is that our primary goal is to prevent Afghanistan from being used as a base for terrorists and extremists to attack the United States and our allies. And whatever else we need to do flows from that objective,” Gates said at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing January 27.

“Afghanistan is the fourth- or fifth-poorest country in the world, and if we set ourselves the objective of creating some sort of Central Asian Valhalla over there, we will lose,” Gates said, “because nobody in the world has that kind of time, patience, and money, to be honest.”

Afghanistan has been subjected to decades of imperialist plunder and a 10-year war between Soviet forces and U.S.-backed rightist Mujahideen fighters that decimated the country’s agriculture and economic infrastructure, followed by a further destructive civil war among competing Mujahideen factions.

Most Afghans lack access to the most basic necessities, including clean water. As a result, Afghanistan has the third highest infant mortality rate in the world and a life expectancy of 44 years.

Opium accounts for the vast majority of Afghanistan’s export trade, which is a \$3-billion-a-year business. It remains a major source of cash for the Taliban, who took in up to \$100 million last year, according to the United Nations. U.S. and NATO forces in December announced their decision to di-

rectly target those capitalists in the drug trade who finance the Taliban.

Top U.S. officials are asking European NATO allies to contribute more to the imperialist force in Afghanistan. The requests include more troops, removal of caveats by many allied powers that restrict their troops to the safest areas of the country, and more money and other resources to train and equip Afghan military and police forces.

French foreign minister Hervé Morin ruled out sending more French troops January 21, before the question was even posed by the new U.S. administration.

The response by other European powers remains to be seen. Vice President Joseph Biden will lead a U.S. delegation—which will include National Security Advisor James Jones and Gen. David Petraeus, head of the U.S. Central Command—to the February 6–8 international “security conference” in Munich, Germany, to present Washington’s position.

Conference participants will also include German chancellor Angela Merkel, French president Nicolas Sarkozy, Afghan president Hamid Karzai, and Iranian parliamentary speaker Ali Larijani.

The election postponement means Karzai will remain in office for at least another four months. There are signs that Washington is not satisfied with the Karzai government, but has no better alternative.

Karzai has criticized Washington for, among other things, undermining the central government’s authority in the country—which remains weak—by soliciting support from various local landlord-based rulers, who control areas of the country with their own militias.

Karzai, an honorary English knight, is from a family that had supported the monarchy of King Zahir Shah until his overthrow in 1973. He was briefly deputy foreign minister under the unstable Mujahideen government in 1992.

Like the U.S. administration of William Clinton, Karzai was initially favorable to the rise of the Taliban movement in the mid-1990s. Both saw the Taliban’s military victories then sweeping the country as a potential force that could bring “stability” to the violent chaos of competing Mujahideen factions that ensued following their victory over the Soviet occupation.

But Karzai pulled back from taking a post as the Taliban ambassador to the United Nations, he has said, after realizing that the Taliban had become a proxy of the Pakistani military. He later became an outspoken opponent of the Taliban as it came increasingly allied with al-Qaeda.

Jobless, no benefits

Continued from front page

AstraZeneca; 4,500 by Kodak; 2,000 by airplane maker Cessna; and 7,000 by Macy’s.

Four days after announcing 20,000 jobs were being cut, heavy equipment maker Caterpillar said January 30 it was laying off an additional 2,110 workers at Illinois plants in Aurora, Decatur, and East Peoria, with more to come, according to a company spokesperson.

With a 25 percent decline in sales tied to sharp cuts in commercial construction, Caterpillar, which is the world’s largest maker of mining and construction machinery, has cut its total workforce by 20 percent.

State and city governments are implementing new layoffs and cutbacks in social programs. Detroit mayor Ken Cockrel has called for a 10 percent wage cut for city employees or the layoff of 1,000 workers. New York mayor Michael Bloomberg is proposing to raise \$900 million by increasing the sales tax up to 8.625 percent. The mayor is also proposing to eliminate about 23,000 city jobs.

Declining capitalist production is having a devastating impact on toilers worldwide. In South Korea, industrial production plummeted 18.6 percent in December from a year earlier. In China, some 20 million migrant workers—out of an estimated 130 million—have been laid off or are unable to find work, many now returning to the countryside.

In Brazil, nearly 655,000 jobs were eliminated in December. CSN, a steel firm, cut 300 jobs and 3,000 other workers that month were put on “temporary leave.” General Motors, Fiat, Ford, and Volkswagen have placed thousands of auto workers on leave or axed their jobs. In mid-January, General Motors eliminated 802 jobs at its São Jose dos Campos plant located outside São Paulo. In response, workers organized a protest action, downing their tools for an hour at the start of their shift January 13.

In the United States, President Barack Obama is working up details on a plan to provide hundreds of billions of additional dollars to the banks, in addition to the unallocated parts of the \$700 billion bailout package approved by Congress last fall.

“Government officials seeking to revamp the U.S. financial bailout have discussed spending another \$1 trillion to \$2 trillion,” reported the *Wall Street Journal* January 29, which could include setting up a “bad bank” for “toxic assets.”

Obama’s ‘stimulus’ package

Vowing to save or create 3 million jobs over the next few years, President Obama is promoting the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, an \$819 billion “stimulus” package. It was passed by the House of Representatives January 28. The Senate began working on its version of the bill February 3.

The House bill provides \$275 billion in tax reductions and about \$526 billion to be spent in 2009 and 2010 in a potpourri of areas. These include funds for state governments, the military and state and local police departments, health care, education, infrastructure repair, an extension of unemployment benefits, credits to businesses for “creating jobs,” and protectionist measures on use of U.S. iron and steel.

Companies wishing to receive “stimulus” funds are required to participate in the “E-verify” program, which checks a worker’s Social Security number and eligibility to work in the United States.

Only 5 percent of the \$819 billion goes toward repairing the country’s infrastructure. The bill includes \$30 billion for roads and \$12 billion for rapid transit. Nearly \$7 billion is being allocated to various branches of the U.S. military as well as to strengthening border patrols by the Department of Homeland Security.

Some companies like Corning Inc., a producer of fiber-optic cable, could get about \$9 billion from the stimulus plan to wire community colleges, libraries, and rural governments with high-speed Internet equipment. But that didn’t stop the company from laying off 3,500 workers, 13 percent of its workforce, January 27.

The plan includes extending unemployment benefits through Dec. 31, 2009, covering 65 percent of an individual’s Cobra health insurance premiums for up to 12 months if they are no longer covered by their employers’ group coverage, and allocating \$11 billion to provide “temporary optional” Medicaid to some workers newly receiving unemployment checks.